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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001298

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/03/2019
TAGS: PREL MOPS GR TU
SUBJECT: TURKISH MILITARY DENIES HARASSMENT OF GREEK
AIRLINER

Classified By: Pol-Mil Counselor Anthony Godfrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (SBU) The Turkish General Staff (TGS) posted a statement (unofficial translation in para. 2) on September 2 refuting Greek media claims that Turkish F-16s harassed a Greek airliner in the Aegean on August 31.

¶2. (U) Begin unofficial translation of TGS statement:

Allegations from Greece have arisen that eight Turkish F-16s had harassed Olympic Airlines Flight OAL-983 on August 31 while it was in international airspace flying at 14000 feet, and that one Turkish fighter came within 100 feet of the passenger airliner.

An investigation into this issue has found that the Turkish aircraft were under radar control conducting training flights at 6000 feet in international airspace in the Aegean.

It has been determined that the closest point that Turkish aircraft came within the Greek aircraft was three nautical miles. It appears that there is no basis for the Greek claims and that they are not true.

End Statement.

¶3. (C) Comment: The TGS normally does not react to Greek media claims about Turkish military flights in the Aegean, but may have felt compelled to respond in this instance given the extreme nature of the claim and the concerns we have expressed regarding Turkish military flights elevating tensions in the Aegean. End comment.

JEFFREY

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